

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020DY007
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Name of Service:	Little Milestones Montessori School
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Address of Service:	St Andrew's Parish Centre, Church Road, Malahide, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K36 X968
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lynne Forsythe
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	24/04/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Taaffe
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Little Milestones Montessori School is a privately owned early years service which is currently registered to accommodate 18 pre-school children aged between 2 years 8 months and 6 years on a sessional basis from Monday to Friday for 38 weeks each year. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme from 9.00am to 12midday each weekday during the school calendar year with the option provided for the children to attend for an extra 30 minutes from 12.00 to 12.30pm daily for an additional fee. School aged children are not accommodated in the service. Little Milestones Montessori School is conducted from the ground floor of St Andrew’s Parish Centre which is located to the rear of St. Andrew’s National School in Malahide village. Currently there is one pre-school room in operation with sanitary facilities provided on the same corridor on the ground floor. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises. A separate school age service is operated in the premises by a different registered provider each afternoon.

Staffing

The registered provider and two core staff members were present on the day of the inspection, all of whom work directly with the children on a daily basis.

Methodology

Tusla’s Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well- being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider is the designated person in charge of the service and a named staff member is appointed to deputise in the absence of the registered provider when required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived at the service on the morning of inspection.

The staff files for the registered provider and the 2 staff members were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written references available for the registered provider and 2 written, validated references available for the 2 staff members.

(a) Five of the 6 written references reviewed were from past employers.

(b) One of the 6 written references reviewed was from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and the 2 staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) The registered provider and both staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) On the day of inspection, the registered provider and at least 1 and, for most of the session, 2 staff members were working directly with 13 pre-school children aged 3 years 7 months to 5 years 2 months who were all attending the service on a sessional basis.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child’s registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured a record was kept in writing in relation to the children’s details as outlined in Regulation 15 (a) to (i). All children’s registration forms were reviewed and each form was found to be appropriately completed with the required information.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (a) each child’s learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child’s learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic needs:

- The registered provider and staff members demonstrated sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for the children as evidenced in the adults' use of language, speaking in soft tones using the children's individual names, making eye-contact and positioning themselves at the children's level during interactions.
- The children brought healthy snacks from home, in line with the healthy eating policy of the service. The adults were observed sitting with the children at snack time, encouraging conversation and extending interactions in a friendly and relaxed manner.
- The adults were observed to be responsive to the children's cues when they needed to use the toilet and accompanied the children to the sanitary facilities on each occasion, providing discreet supervision and assistance when required. No child wore nappies as all children were toilet trained.
- All children were afforded the opportunity for a change of environment to the outdoor play area during the inspection and were dressed appropriately before going outside.
- Soft matting and cushions were provided at the library area of the pre-school room to facilitate children to take a break from activities and rest if required.

Supporting Relationships around Children

- The inspector observed the registered provider and staff members interacting with the children in a kind and respectful manner at all times during the inspection. The children were observed to engage comfortably with the staff members present and sought out staff for assistance and support when necessary.
- Children's behaviour and achievements were positively reinforced with recognition, praise and encouragement by the adults caring for them. The registered provider and staff members were observed promoting positive behaviour through modelling respectful interactions between themselves and also with the children, and the use of simple rules that children could understand and follow.
- The children in the service were encouraged to value and respect each other. The registered provider and staff members positively encouraged and praised the children in relation to kind actions, sharing, taking turns and saying please and thank you. The registered provider and staff members were observed to respond promptly and gently to minor issues that arose between the children on the day of inspection which prevented any escalation or upset on the children's part. The children were also supported to

develop and use their language skills to enable them to express their feelings and ask for what they wanted.

- Partnership with parents was demonstrated to a high degree in the service. The adults were observed warmly welcoming and chatting comfortably with the parents in a familiar way when they arrived at the service to collect the children at the end of the session. A mobile phone application was used by the service to communicate with parents on a regular basis. Each Friday morning the service welcomed the parents in to spend the first 10 minutes of the session in the pre-school room to share in their child's achievements and to observe their arts and crafts creations and the lay-out of the learning environment. Folders containing the children's work was sent home every term and the children's individual learning journals sent home at the end of the year. On enrolment the parents were provided with the service's information booklet in conjunction with relevant policies and procedures.

Physical & Material Environment:

- The layout of the room and the outdoor play area supported the children's independence in making choices and provided lots of opportunity to initiate and take the lead in activities. The children were observed collaborating with each other in relation to their play plans.
- A broad and suitable range of play materials and specialist Montessori equipment was laid out in defined interest areas to facilitate children to initiate and sustain meaningful play activities. The interest areas included practical life, sensorial, numeracy, language and cultural areas and a well-resourced home corner. All play materials and equipment are removed from the care room at the end of the session and placed in storage, in line with the requirements and policy of the Parish Centre.
- An appreciation of the environment and nature were dominant themes in the service, as evidenced by the broad range of relevant books, posters and arts and crafts on display in the pre-school room. A large stand-in cardboard rocket was in place and enthusiastically accessed by the children during the inspection, and posters and models of the solar system were provided to enhance children's learning.
- Family photographs were on display which supported the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and bridged the gap between the service and home.
- The service has use of the unoccupied main hall in the parish centre for the first 10 minutes of the session every morning for running games and physical activity.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed by walls and fencing and mainly surfaced in artificial grass, with impact-absorbent matting in place in one section. Outdoor play materials included a plastic playhouse, a

well-resourced supply of sand in a tray-top table with supportive play equipment, hoops, balls, large plastic blocks, a sit-on rocking toy, diggers and other push-along construction toys which supported the children to engage in physical activity outside.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The main entrance door into the premises was secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised or an unauthorised adult from entering the service. A push button digital lock was in place on the doorway leading into the pre-school room. The gateway to the side of the premises was secured for the duration of the session, restricting access to and from the rear of the building.
- Children were safely escorted to and from the outdoor play area using a safety walking rope with handles which enabled the children to access the play area under adult supervision in a controlled and safe manner.
- The warm water temperature in the taps in the sanitary accommodation in the service was recorded between 30.4°C and 31.7°C on the day of inspection. The registered provider monitored the warm water temperatures on a daily basis and ensured that the warm water supply in these taps did not to exceed the maximum safe water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The play materials and equipment provided in the service were stored on stable-based low level shelving which reduced the risk of the furniture toppling over and causing injury to a child.

Infection Control:

- A refrigerator was available in the kitchen in the premises and used to store perishable items contained in the children's snacks which were provided from home by the parents, reducing the risk of bacteria growth in these food items.

- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet and following messy play and outdoor play. There was running warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand hygiene at the wash hand basins in the service.
- Tissues were available for wiping noses and suitable bins are provided in the service to facilitate the hygienic disposal of waste.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were available in the service and the service was visibly clean.

Administration of Medication:

- No child attending the service required any medication to be administered on the day of inspection. Administration of medication forms were available to record the details of any medication administered in the service, should the need arise.

Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

Outings:

- The registered provider stated that the service did not conduct outings.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The service maintained accurate details of all children in attendance during the inspection. The children were entered as present in attendance records noting each child's arrival and departure time on a daily basis.

(3)(a)(b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children and their parents or guardians, employees, approved students or authorised visitors could enter the service. A visitor's book was maintained and on arrival the inspector was requested to record their attendance on the premises and the purpose of their visit.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training and informed the inspector that she is always on the premises when the service is in operation, to ensure that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid box was suitably equipped and easily accessible to the staff and available at all times for the children attending the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(c) an authorised person.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The records indicated that fire drills were conducted at least on a monthly basis in the service, most recently undertaken on 21/03/2024.

(b) Records were available showing that the smoke detection system was certified as having been serviced on 25/04/2023.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire are displayed in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) The fire extinguishers in the service were serviced in February 2023 which is outside the recommended annual servicing frequency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1)(b) The fire extinguishers were serviced.

Preventive Action

(1)(b) The registered provider will ensure that the fire extinguishers are serviced as regulated.

Supporting documentation submitted

- The registered provider submitted documentation to the Inspectorate confirming that the fire extinguishers were serviced on 10/05/2024.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance observed under Regulation 26(1)(b) has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 22 pre-school children attending the service on a sessional basis, valid until 27/03/2025.